Le Fleur Rouge

By: TwinCarcino

There was once a queen, who was blessed with the power given to her by a red flower. This power was passed onto her two youngest daughters, and the three disappeared without a trace. Six years later, Satsuki Kiryuin finds herself hunting a strange blonde thief and clinging to her side a little girl with two pet lizards. Discontinued

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Prologue

Authors Note: Hey everyone, this is *Le Fleur Rouge,* or in English; *The Red Flower.* It is a Tangled inspired story, and I hope you enjoy.

This chapter has been beta'd, so special thanks to MikasaAckerman104 for doing that.

In a kingdom, far away, there lived a king and queen loved by all. The king was a brilliant yet gentle man, and was always happy to work with the common people. His wife the queen, wanted them all to feel loved and to know that they were loved. On the day that their first daughter was born, the kingdom rejoiced. She had her mothers face they said, or more specifically, had her eyebrows, a playful jab. But, a year later with her second child, the queen fell ill. All the best doctors tried to cure her, yet nothing worked. When they were running short on time, the king sent out the order.

Find the red flower, he told them. Find the rare red flower that only grew once in a hundred years. Its healing properties were said to be unmatched, capable of healing anything and everything. It was a long and hard search, but they managed to find the flower. As expected, when they ground the flower up into a medicine and gave it to the queen, she began to get better. Healthier. The flower and its magical properties had infused into the queens very being. In short, she could not be hurt, any and every injury she got was healed almost instantly.

Shortly after, she gave birth to a baby girl with beautiful blonde hair. And because of the flower inside of the queen, the girl was born with the same abilities from the flower that her mother had.

Before long, the power the flower gave her began to change the queen. No longer was she the kind and loving woman the kingdom knew her as. In her place was a manipulative, cruel woman who

lusted for power. Her own growing ambition was mirrored by her young daughter. The king, well, he was heartbroken and horrified by what his wife, the love of his life, had become. It wasn't until the eldest had turned twelve and the third child was born that he could not bear to see his beloved wife and daughters like that any longer. He vowed to find a way to destroy the flowers effects on his wife and two daughters and to make them human once more. So he locked himself in his lab to work.

To say that his wife was not happy about it would have been an understatement. She was livid, betrayed even, when she heard about his plans. But through the endless nights of arguing and attempts to convince him otherwise proved fruitless; she could not change his mind. The growing dangers the flower had bestowed on her life had not helped her stop him. The people had grown more and more anxious, whispers of her being inhuman being told in the dark corners of the streets where no eyes looked. A few brave souls had even attempted to kill her. Enough was enough and nothing would change the mind of either.

Then before any knew it, in the silence and cold of night, everything changed.

The castle was attacked, another attempt to end the queen and the two younger daughters lives. But unlike the other attempts, this one was different. There were more people, more chaos. In the midst of that chaos, the queen vanished along with her the two young girls.

Terrified at losing them, the king sent his men out to try and find them, but could find no trace. He knew not if they were kidnapped, or if his wife took them and ran. In his sorrow, he buried himself in his work, trying to complete making something to return them to their lost humanity when, if, they were found. The eldest and heir to his throne could do nothing as he worked himself to death, becoming cold and distant herself in response, blaming her mother for all of this. She hoped, in thought, that her mother was dead elsewhere.

Chapter One

Le Matin Lumière

This chapter has been Beta'd

One step... another step and a small hop.

The blonde gave a small giggle as she jumped over the gap between the two houses, making her way through the city. Did anyone who was awake this early in the morning notice her up there? No, why would they? She didn't want them to see her up here; making it that they wouldn't notice her.

With a smile, she sped up her running when she landed on the roof of the palace. Glancing at the sky, she let out a hum as she figured out the time. She had a few hours before she would need to meet back up with Maman. That was, of course, more than enough time for her. Smiling, Nui couldn't help but take appreciate the view she was granted being this high up. It was beautiful. Even the palace she stood on was a beautiful piece of work. How long had it been since she'd actually been in it though? Six years, more or less.

Well, it was time to change that, she decided as she took out a long rope.

Tying one end of the rope around her waist, and the other end to the roof, she opened one of the glass panels on the ceiling, with the ease of an expert. Peering down, Nui had to stifle a giggle at the sight she was given.

Below her was a small circle of guards, all armed to the teeth. They were all facing towards the walls as they stood close together, within the circle they made, sitting atop a soft looking purple velvet pillow was a golden, gem encrusted box. The prize Nui was looking for.

How foolish of these guards, they wanted to protect that treasure, yet they aren't even watching it? All they did was have their backs to it, its a miracle no one had already stolen that small locked box yet. She would have the honor to be the first to take it, and it would be their own faults for not being capable of stopping her.

She was quiet as a mouse as she came down from the ceiling slowly and steadily, and as ever, careful. Pausing when she was right above the box to look around, a wide smile broke across her face as she snatched it and began to pull herself. She was extra careful not to drop the box. The kings greatest treasure was inside of here, worth a fortune, worth several fortunes actually. It wasn't until she was near the top that she finally stopped and let a new sense of pride wash over her.

At the large double doors a woman dressed in white pants and a matching uniform shirt stood, staring up at her with one hand on the hilt of her sword. Her eyes were filled with shock, which a second later turned to cold anger. Nui knew who this woman was, though she doubted she knew who Nui was.

"Thief!" she yelled out at Nui, catching the guards attentions and Nui's smile grew as she saw the pitiful men stumble in shock at seeing her hanging so high above them, "Come back down here, now!"

Despite the authority in her voice that would have had a weaker man ready to obey out of fear, Nui just tapped her chin with her free hand, swinging a little from where she hung, "Hmm...nah!" Sticking her tongue out playfully at them, she finished the final pulls and climbed back onto the roof. Quickly cutting the rope and taking off running. She didn't even look at where she was going when she jumped from the palace roof onto that of a close building. Maybe it was a shop, but she didn't care what it was. The guards would be after her in no time and the game of chase would start.

Oh, but the fun was just beginning.

Sweet dreams, flitting about like clouds in the early morning day. The morning suns light slipping into the room through the closed blinds as it rose, wasn't nearly enough to wake the sleeping youth huddled under several blankets and quilts.

It was the entrance of two small lizards, a one-eyed one with a red cloth tied around his neck, the other wearing one in blue, that would wake the sleeping being. They, awoken by the light, climbed from the basket hanging on the wall. Landing on the bed with a soft inaudible thud, they scuttled towards the top where only a mop of black hair wasn't covered completely by the blankets. Exchanging a glance they got on either side of the bump, and crawled under the blankets.

Seconds later the blankets were thrown off as the child under let out a cry of alarm. Letting out a breath of relief realizing there was no immediate danger, she glared at the two smug looking reptiles.

"Senketsu! Junketsu! Why'd you do that?" she demanded, rubbing her ears where they had stuck their tongues in. Her glare softened after a moment, before widening in surprise and running to a calendar she had on the far side of the wall. "Why didn't you wake me earlier? They'll be home today! I have to make sure everything's spotless!" she yelled, examining the relatively clean room.

Ryuko didn't have many things to begin with, a few stuffed toys, a couple of books; all but one far above her reading level, was all that she possessed. If she was bored, she'd usually help her sister with sewing, running back and forth collecting things for her or depositing things. If she wasn't helping her, Ryuko would play with her two friends, Senketsu and Junketsu. Their unnatural intelligence made them fun playmates and they usually helped clean up after they played.

It was her sisters work room that was the only one that was ever a trouble to clean, because it was filled with needles, thread, and strips of cloth strewn haphazardly around it.

But for the most part, Ryuko had kept it clean while they were gone, so all she would have to do would be to dust and sweep. She'd done her best to organize her sisters room as best as she could, and shuddered at the thought of having left it in any state she may think of as a mess. She loved her sister, that was not to be doubted at all, and her sister loved her but...

Anger and Nui was not a pleasant mix.

That was something she's learned several times, and she could still feel the sensation of the bruises and cuts gained from being on the receiving end of her wrath. But that was just because she'd messed up, broken something of Nui's, misplaced something, or done something in general to upset her older sister. Nui didn't want to hurt her, but if Ryuko did something bad, she had to learn one way or another and Nui had an awful time controlling her temper.

Her mother was always there afterwords though, to dry her tears and make her feel better. Plus, her injuries never lasted more than a few minutes at a time, so as her mother said, any harm inflicted upon her by Nui was a trivial thing. She'd learned over the years how to not anger her sister anyways, how to be careful around her so that she wouldn't have to risk getting hurt in the first place.

But that was enough of that, Ryuko decided as she grabbed a broom and got to work. She had to clean and make this place look spotless for her mother and Nui, and with the help of her friends, she would be able to get done before they got home.

Perhaps a few hours later, she had just finished ringing out the cloth she used to wipe away the dust when she could hear a voice calling for her from outside.

"Oh, Ryuko!"

With a wide smile, she dashed across the room to her window, peeking her head outside, "One moment!" she yelled to the one below, before going back in and grabbing the rope ladder that was

nailed to the window sill. Carefully she lowered it out the window, not too fast so it would hit her mother, but fast enough that patience didn't run dry. When that was done she stepped back and waited with excitement for her mother to climb up.

Bright lights were the first to arrive, and she had to bring up an arm up for a minute to shield her eyes from her mothers unnaturally bright hair. But when that passed, she ran into the tall woman's open arms with pure joy and happiness at her return.

"Welcome home, Mommy!" the six year old exclaimed, throwing herself bodily into Ragyo, who easily caught her and spun her once, twice, three times before holding her in her arms in a loving hug. Ryuko's smile only grew as she nuzzled against her in response. "How was your trip? Where's Nui?" she added the last part upon noticing that the blonde hadn't come up.

Ragyo just smiled gently, "I'm glad to see you're alright, sorry for leaving you for so long," she said, giving her another squeeze before placing her down on the ground, "Nui ran off to do something, I don't know what. She'll be back later, so don't fret."

With that, the woman began walking, with Ryuko hot on her heels, examining each room to ensure that it was all clean and in the condition she'd requested when she and Nui had left a few days ago. Her heels making a soft clicking sound with each step, growing louder when they went down the stairs of their home. When she was satisfied with how the tower looked, she turned back to Ryuko and patted her head affectionately, "You're such a good girl keeping everything clean; this place is nearly spotless! As a reward, I think I'll make you your favorite for dinner, how does that sound?"

The child's mouth nearly began watering at that idea. To be honest, she'd only been eating bread and jam the last few days, being the only thing in her reach. It wasn't much and wasn't filling, so this was a reward she was delighted to have.

"Your hair is an unruly mess, have you brushed it at all while I was gone?" Ragyo said, changing the topic and tsk-ing slightly as her finger found a knot in her youngest daughters black hair. "Come, lets go to the family room, I'll have to fix it," she gave the red strand a playful tug as she said that. A visible sign of the flower leaving its mark on Ryuko, just as it had with Ragyo's own brightly colored hair. She didn't even have to say anything else, Ryuko knew what to do and ran into the next room.

By the time Ragyo entered, Ryuko had already managed to push the elders heavy but soft chair over by the fire place, a stool in front of it and a brush on the arm of the chair. The elder Kiryuin couldn't help but chuckle at the sight, oh how obedient her daughter her was. Grabbing the stool that Ryuko sat atop and pulling it and the child closer to herself, she began running the brush through her hair. Being careful to not cause pain but to ensure the knots got out.

"Mommy...?" Ryuko began, hesitantly at first, Ragyo made a hum in response and the child stumbled over what to say. Spying Junketsu and Senketsu in the rafters above, moving their small front feet to try and urge her to continue with the request she'd been dying to ask for as long as she could remember. Taking a deep breath she managed to ask her question, tentatively and worried of how she may react, "Can...well both you and Nui get to go outside so I was wondering if you can...take me outside too?"

Ragyo paused her actions, brush held up in the air as she digested what her daughter had just asked. A second later she brought it down, "Oh, Ryuko. Why the sudden interest in the outside? Aren't you happy being in here, where you're safe and sound?"

"That's just it," Ryuko said finding herself growing a bit more confident in her request, "You and Nui get to see all the things on the outside, meet so many people and see so many things...I want...I just want to see something new...do something new."

Sighing, Ragyo picked Ryuko up, placing her on her lap and wrapped her arms around her. It wasn't long until she felt Ryuko

quickly relax into her grip. "Tell me, Ryuko. Why is it that the three of us live in this tower far from everyone else?" she asked softly, running her fingers through the young girls hair, "Just humor me for a moment."

She was quiet for a moment before answering, "Because...outside it's dangerous, especially for people like us. They'd want to take advantage of our gifts and ability, or hurt us because they fear us," Ryuko said softly. Above them, Junketsu had to hold Senketsu back from jumping down to offer some help, knowing that if Ragyo saw them, they'd be thrown out. Or give them to Nui to play with which was the worst thing that could happen.

Ragyo smiled gently, "Exactly, the worlds scary out there and dangerous, with nasty people who would hurt you without a second thought," she said, rocking the girl gently in her lap, "I didn't allow Nui out of here until she was nearly thirteen years old, capable of defending herself against these people. You...you're too young to face the evil in this world."

Her attempts at arguing fell silent, her will to fight her mother on this topic gone as she tried to just relax in her mothers hold, finding herself growing sleepy from the gentle rocking motion.

"Stop her!"

Nui could still hear them yelling at her as she ran, perhaps she'd bitten off more than she could chew robbing from the palace. Any sane person would have stopped running at this point and surrendered, but Nui wasn't exactly sane. She wasn't normal either, so instead of having grown tired from running from the guards and their horses, she was still in great condition. It helped to have magically enhanced genes giving her unnatural stamina, strength and speed. It was for that reason that she was able to stay ahead of the guards this entire time.

Though it would seem that they were gaining on her.

She didn't even need to glance back to see who was at the front of them all. Riding a white horse, thick eyebrows downward and a scowl fitting her face as always was the very same woman who had been the first to spot Nui at the castle. She would yell at the others around her, spitting out orders but her eyes never once left Nui. It wasn't surprising that she would lead the guards in the case, not at all.

But even if it wasn't a surprise, words could not describe the excitement that filled the blonde at knowing she was in the chase. It made it more fun.

A wide smile spread across her face as Nui doubled her efforts. Intending to lose the soldiers, all but one at least. All but a certain one.

It wasn't hard to do so actually. A few turns into hard to get places, and a more dangerous route to run through and the guards slowly began to hold back and end the chase. All but her intended quarry and as before, it was to be expected. She had what the woman wanted tucked under her arms, and nothing was going to stop her from getting it back. Not even when she lost her horse and was stuck chasing Nui on foot would she stop the chase.

That was exactly what Nui was hoping for.

They were to far from the city now, closer to Nui's home than the others. Trees and the undergrowth having gotten thick, and the light starting to grow dim making it even harder for someone unfamiliar with the area to maneuver. When Nui could hear the rushing water, she knew it was time to end this game, before Maman started wondering where she was.

A few leaps and bounds had found her at the source of the sound, a waterfall with the other across from her, pitch black sword drawn and pointed at Nui.

"Who are you?" she demanded, taking a menacing step forward. The dangerous aura she let off would have had any other person curling up in fear, but Nui wasn't a normal person, "Do you have any idea what you stole? Return it now!"

Nui smiled, tapping her chin with a finger and leaning back, "I took...a very important treasure from the palace," she explained cheerily, if not a little condescending to the other, giving a small giggle as she rocked back and forth on her heels, "But, return it? I'd rather not."

That was all the other needed to hear before she lunged forward. Had Nui's reflexes not been so quick, she would have lost a hand to that, but instead the blade sliced through air as she spun out of the way.

"Nice try!" she said, dodging another attack, "Ooh, you almost got me that time!"

Despite her smile, she had to admit, the other was skilled, very skilled with that sword. She'd always been pretty good with it when they were kids, but Nui hadn't expected her to get this good at it. It was more effort to evade each attack than she expected. She may be good...but Nui was better.

Adjusting her grip on the box, she brought an arm up to let the sword slice into it. The pain she felt she hid behind a smile as she gripped the sword, wrenching it from her opponents grip as the warm red liquid slid down her arm and dripped onto the ground.

"I think you've lost something," Nui said, tossing the sword into the waterfall and waving it goodbye as it vanished from sight before turning to the other wide a wide smile, the pain was starting to ebb away by now, and was no doubt healing, "What'll you do now? Oh, I know! You should join your favorite sword!"

Faster than the other could react, Nui lunged forward and shoved her. That was enough to cause her to lose her balance, arms waving

in a frantic and useless attempt to regain balance, but it wasn't any use as she fell backwards into the rushing water

"Bye, bye!" Nui yelled as she saw her struggle to fight against the current, waving as the woman disappeared over the edge of the waterfall. "Now that that is over with, I should be heading back home, Maman must be wondering where I am, and little Ryuko must be worried sick!" she said to herself, as she began skipping in the opposite direction.

Chapter Two

La Fleur Rouge

This chapter has been beta'd

Ryuko didn't understand why Ragyo had gotten so upset after Nui came home, or why she was angry at the pretty golden box Nui had brought with her. Her sister must have done something bad while she was gone, really bad. That was the only time her mommy ever got mad at the blonde. She had also been hurt when she got back, and Ryuko noticed when she saw the blood on Nui's arm.

Their mother had demanded right away to know as to what had happened, but her anger had vanished as quickly as it appeared when she remembered the youngest daughter was there, before kindly asking Ryuko to stay in her room for a short while before she dragged Nui off. She wanted to talk to the eldest in private, and she didn't want to show such fury in front of the six year old.

The young girl was curious to know what was going on, and that curiosity is what had her creeping out of the room, quiet as a mouse as she approached the stairs. She shook off Senketsu's attempts to get her back in her her room, crouching down instead to peer over the steps where she could see Nui and Ragyo. Ryuko leaned forward a little to try and hear them easier.

"Nui! What in the world drove you to do something so...so... *stupid* ?" Ragyo hissed, and the little girl could see her holding Nui's arm in a vice like grip, could see the blondes face scrunched up in pain, "Do you have any idea what would have happened if any one of them had followed you here? They would have *found* this tower, would have found *us* !" she snapped.

Nui had, for all she's worth, looked ashamed of her actions and ashamed of having angered their mother, "Maman...I'm sorry, I didn't think-"

"Of course you didn't think!" Ragyo interrupted her, jerking her forward and shaking her roughly, "You *never* think, you only do what amuses you, damn the consequences! You could have put us all at risk of being discovered and you wouldn't have cared, would you? You got *hurt* , Nui! Don't you think they're going to wonder why you were bleeding one moment, and not the next?"

The eldest daughter looked down, hand coming up to hold where she had gotten cut earlier that day, "I...I'm sorry, Maman, I'm sorry."

Ryuko had never, ever seen her mother this angry. She'd never seen her jerk Nui around like that and yell at Nui like that. Her mommy never got so angry, never got violent, this side of Ragyo was not her mother. It couldn't be.

Their voices turned into background noise as Ryuko quickly made her way back to her room, not wanting to see Ragyo like this. She was scared of this side of the woman, very scared of the angry person that took her mothers place down there. Her door was quickly shut and she fell to her knees, still able to hear the yelling from downstairs but unable to make out the words.

So, trying to forget and block out the fight, Ryuko distracted herself with the box Nui had brought and left in her room. It was slow, but as Ryuko examined it, she found herself growing more entranced by it's beauty, her mind starting to forget about Ragyo's anger. The girl found herself relaxing and calming, taking in the simple beauty of the box. There was no way to open it though, it was locked but she supposed Nui might have the key. Something like this must have something grand in it.

"What'd you think is in there?" Ryuko asked her friends.

On her shoulders, Junketsu reached towards the box, foot rubbing against a red gem on it, only to be swatted away by Senketsu who looked back at Ryuko. She may be naive, but from the reaction Ragyo had over it, she could tell Nui did something bad to get this. She stole this and got hurt in the process. Then to answer her question, Senketsu shrugged, and Junketsu shook his head. Something important, that much was obvious.

The girl hummed in response, brushing her thumb over the crest on the very top, "It looks really cool, I wonder if Nui'll open it tonight," she mused.

When the door to the room was thrown open, Ryuko quickly jumped back away from the box, startled, and the two lizards dashed under the dresser to hide from sight. Nui stalked into the room looking upset, but she hid the expression quickly as she approached her.

"Hi, little Ryuko," she smiled, crouching in front of the smaller girl, pinching her cheeks affectionately and acting like she had not just been chewed out, "I'm so glad to see you were alright on you're own the past few days," Nui told her, ruffling her hair a little before she went to stand again. Her gaze went to the small box and her smile grew, "do you like what I found? It's pretty, isn't it?" it as also the reason Nui got in trouble.

Ryuko nodded, her gaze locked on that box again, "It is! Where did you find it?" she asked her.

Her answer was a laugh and another cheek pinch, "it's a secret," Nui told her, standing back up and adjusting her dress, throwing her a playful look, "Maman isn't too happy with me bringing it home though, but that's alright! Once I get it opened, she'll change her mind!" Nui glanced back and forth as though she was about to speak of some secret, her grin growing, "Inside is a great treasure! Can you believe it? Such a small box holding something so big?"

The young girl could only nod in agreement, mesmerized by the possibilities that lied inside.

When she looked at Nui again, she didn't need to say anything. She had lived with her long enough to be able to tell simple things from her expression and she had seen and heard enough to make it clearer. Maman is mad at me, was the unspoken message that her blonde sister was saying. She must have noticed Ryuko's questioning look as she tilted her head to the box as though to say getting that had been the cause of their mothers anger.

Ryuko blinked at that, "Why would she-"

"Ryuko!" Ragyo yelled from down the stairs, cutting her daughter off and causing both heads turn to the door, "Would you like to help me make dinner?"

As Ryuko stood up, Nui flashed her a smile, "Get down there and go help Maman," she said ruffling Ryuko's hair and gave her a playful swat as she dashed past her, urging her to move.

Satsuki gasped and groaned as the drifting log she had been clinging to bumped lightly against two rocks, stopping both it and her from drifting down the river any more. Opening her eyes, she blinked several times to try and clear her eyes, but the blurry vision never left. Letting out another low groan, the woman let go of the log to slowly swim to shore. It wasn't that far off, but with her sore muscles and limbs like jelly, it might as well have been a mile.

As soon as she was able too, Satsuki dropped to her knees, crawling out of the water and collapsing onto her side. Her ribs and lungs were burning, her body felt heavy, and the added weight from her soaked clothes did nothing to help. The pain began to ebb away as she rested until it was just a dull ache and after what felt like eternity, she managed to push herself to stand on shaky legs.

"Where...am I?" she whispered, taking in her surroundings, noting that she had no idea where she was anymore. During the chase, had lost track of where she was but paid little mind to it then, and now she was even more lost. This left her with two choices.

Try and find her way back to the castle, or try to find the thief and get the box back.

The answer came easily enough to her. She was going to look for that blonde haired thief, get the box back and throw her in a dungeon for a long, long time. There was something about that girl that just made Satsuki grind her teeth together.

Her hand reached to her hip, intent to grab Bakuzan's hilt but found only an empty sheath. A moment of confusion brought on by her minds still unfocused state passed before she remembered what happened to it. Right, the girl had taken the sword and thrown it down the river. That girl...she wasn't human, no human could have taken a blow like that without wincing, and the thief wasn't even bothered when her sword sliced into her arm.

It sent Satsuki's hairs on end.

"Just standing here and thinking isn't getting me anywhere," Satsuki muttered to herself, shaking her head, "I need to get moving."

She took a few unsteady steps forward, allowing the instability in her step to ease out until her steps were steady and strong. She still stumbled here and there, fell on her knees once or twice even, but she was moving forward, and that was enough. For now at least.

As she tried to take another step, searing pain shot up her leg causing her to stumbled onto her knees.

"Shit," she hissed, holding onto her leg and glaring at it. This would be a problem and would make it harder to move at least. "I can't let this hold me back," she muttered, holding her breath to keep from making a noise as she slowly pushed herself to stand. The pain was searing, but Satsuki would push forward like she always did.

She could hear how her four gaurds would react if they saw and knew what had happened. Apart from hunting down the girl who caused her this injury of course. The frantic attitude they would have

caused Satsuki to let out a small chuckle. They'd come to worry soon too if she didn't return with the rest of the group and would tear the world apart to find her. She was certain of that. Which meant she had to get this done quickly and return home before they caused too much of a stir.

She walked slowly and the pain began to fade, either from dulling or from her mentally blocking the pain. Her steps became more steady and her pace increasing until she was moving quickly enough for herself. But even after what felt like hours of walking, Satsuki couldn't find any trace of a trail or lead. The sun was going down and she was going to need to find some sort of shelter before long. Continuing her search would have to wait until the morning when there was light out.

Satsuki had just come up to a stop, the pain in her leg still there but having toned down to an ache. "Ow..." she murmured, raising the leg and leaning against the moss covered rock for support as she held the calf, giving it a light massage in hopes to ease the pain.

Or rather, that was what she had planned to do, but when she brought her weight against the rock, she soon learned that it was just a wall of moss with nothing solid behind. With a cry of alarm, Satsuki tumbled back, letting out a groan as she landed rather painfully onto her back.

"Ow..." she muttered staring up at the stone ceiling. It appeared she had fallen into some kind of natural rocky tunnel. Tilting her head father back to try and see the other end, cold excitement ran through her body at the sight of the tower that stood there proudly. Rolling onto her stomach and pushing herself up, Satsuki shook her head, "Unbelievable," she muttered, unable to believe her luck. This sort of thing didn't just happen out of the blue.

But despite her disbelief, Satsuki was already approaching the tower. Just from the appearance alone, she could see it was rather old. Rocks were chipped, there were vines growing around it, and a few

cracked places along the base. But the one thing she couldn't find was a door.

"How am I supposed to get in then?" Satsuki muttered, tilting her head up at the tall, and her eyes narrowed in on an open window. "It's high up, and a dangerous climb," Satsuki muttered running a hand over the surface. The stones were uneven enough to provide a grip, but it would still be dangerous, and fatal if she fell. Though despite the difficulty it would be and even knowing the challenge it'd be to get to the window, Satsuki began a climb.

The first few feet was easy enough, but as the Kiryuin got higher and higher, the stones she could grab were getting farther and farther spaced. On more than one occasion, she nearly slipped and fell. The blood roaring in her ears was deafening. She grunted and panted the higher she got, her fingertips burning with pain as the rough surface scrapped against them. Had Satsuki been a lesser woman, she would have been shaking with fear, but she wasn't. If she felt any fear she did not show it.

After what felt like an eternity of climbing, she was able to grasp onto the ledge of the window. Relief coursed through her as she pulled herself up into the safety of the room. Glancing at her hands, they were smeared red as a result from the climb.

"A needed suffering," Satsuki murmured to herself before taking in the appearance of the room she was in. It appeared to be a bedroom. A kids bedroom at that, if the few toys and stuffed animals were anything to go by. But one thing caught her attention more then the stuffed pig or stacked blocks, and that one thing had sent a cold feeling into herself, along with tingles of excitement and anticipation.

On the desk stood a golden box. The very same golden locked box that had been stolen from the castle.

"Unbelievable." Satsuki whispered, walking towards the object. Her fingers had just barely brushed against the cold surface when

something hard hit the back of her head and Satsuki's world went black as she crumpled to the ground.

Chapter Three

Authors Note: To answer BooCub94's question; there is a one year age difference between Satsuki and Nui, a twelve year difference between Satsuki and Ryuko. At current time, that makes Satsuki eighteen, Nui seventeen and Ryuko six.

This is the **bet a'd** version.

Ryuko stared at the crumpled figure on the ground with wide eyes, her grip on the wooden play sword shaking as she struggled to keep from dropping it. There was a loud thumping that she could hear, and it took Ryuko a minute or two to even realize that it was her own racing heart she was hearing. She was terrified, and it was understandable. Ryuko had just been sitting on her bed, wrapping the handle of her toy sword with white strips of cloth to be more comfortable to grip when some strange woman climbed into her room through the window.

The young Kiryuin had just acted on autopilot and attacked.

"I...is she dead?" she started uncertainly, looking to Senketsu on her shoulder, to Junketsu on the floor, creeping towards the woman. At Junketsu's suggestion, she prodded the strangers head slowly to turn her head and see her face, "Her eyebrows are ginormous!"

As the strange woman mumbled something incomprehensible, confirming that Ryuko did not just commit her first homicide, the girl took several quick steps back like a startled bunny as she waited for the intruder to move. But as it would have it, she stayed on the ground, still knocked out.

Slowly approaching her again, holding the wooden sword in her hand, she looked at her two friends, "What should we do with her?" Ryuko asked. Almost immediately, Junketsu brought his tail up to

have the tip run across his throat, and Ryuko winced at his suggestion, "I'm not doing that! I'm not gonna kill her I'm gonna...I'm going to hide her!" Hide her in case Nui or Ragyo came up. She wasn't ready to explain this, didn't know how and she didn't want to explain right now.

At a half an hour later, Ryuko had tied the woman up well enough, taking the chair from her desk and a rope she used to play jump rope with. It was getting the woman on thankfully the chair that had proved difficult, being heavy and Ryuko having little physical strength put together had not worked well. But somehow, she managed to get the woman on the chair and shove her into the closet. ther mother, through her own obsession with clothes, had given Ryuko a rather large closet. It was far too spacious for the girl who did not possess nearly enough clothes to fill it, but it was big enough to fit the tied up woman in.

When it was over, Ryuko sat on the ground, panting as she stared at the closed closet doors, "I've...I've got a person in my closet...I've got a person in my closet!" she repeated, a wide grin splitting across the child's face as she looked at Senketsu, "I've got a person in my closet! Can you believe it?" at her question, Junketsu shook his head, earning a light hit from Senketsu. Ryuko didn't notice the two and stood up, twirling the wooden sword in her hand.

"Well, looks like you did great, Ryuko! Not as weak as you look are you-ow!" She was cut off in her self-praise when she accidentally hit herself in the face with the sword, "Ow, ow, ow!"

Dropping the wood to the ground, Ryuko rubbed at the right side of her face, there was probably a bruise forming, she knew well enough that there were tears forming from the stinging pain. Senketsu had the kindness to approach her, attempt to offer some comfort to the physical pain, which was more than Junketsu did. "It's fine, really," she said sniffling a bit, refusing to cry. She was given a well enough reason to leave when Ragyo called for her from down the stairs.

"Coming!" Ryuko yelled, picking up Senketsu and Junketsu, rushing to the closet and opening the door, proud to find that the stranger was still conked out in there. "I need you two to stay with her," Ryuko whispered to the two lizards as they climbed down her arm to rest on the chair, looking up at her as though waiting for further instructions. "Keep her in there! I'm gonna tell Mommy and Nui about this! They'll be amazed!"

Senketsu gave a small salute to show his obedience but for the most part; Junketsu just rolled his eyes acting like he didn't want to but would.

As Ryuko raced down the stairs, her mind went over ways to explain this to Ragyo, and to avoid any anger from her mother. In seconds she was in the main room, where Nui was looking at two different outfits. Her sister's face brightened when she saw Ryuko, looking like she'd just seen the answer to her prayers.

"There you are!" the blonde exclaimed and she shoved the two fabrics not so gently into Ryuko's face, "Which one is better?"

Slowly stepping away, Ryuko blinked at the sudden question. It wasn't exactly an unusual question; it was actually a common one that Nui would ask her when trying to choose between two outfits. Though the outfits Nui always chose were always identical in every way, and these two dresses were no exception to the case. Same shade, same fabric, same thread.

Smiling, Ryuko grabbed onto the one to the left, "This one!" Ryuko told Nui, nodding with certainty in her choice. She may not be the best when it comes to fashion, but she was confident in her choice, "It's got the nicest bow."

Nui pulled it back to examine it, before throwing the other one away and giving her thanks to her sister as she shoved it into a bag. It was then that Ryuko noticed that she and their mother were packing up bags.

"You're leaving again?" Ryuko asked, tilting her head to the side in confusion. They'd just gotten back, and now they were leaving again?

Ragyo smiled as she walked to her youngest child, kneeling down so they were closer in height, "Yes, dear child," she said, taking hold of the girls hands into her own, "Nui and I will be going on another trip, a rather long one this time. But I've ensured that you've more than enough food to last until we return. I even left a few sweets for you to have, but you must promise not to eat them as your meals."

The girl nodded in affirmation, though her mind wasn't thinking of what sweets Ragyo had left for her this time. She needed to let them know what she did, so they could take her with them this time. Tell them that she had someone in her room tied up that she brought down on her own. Ryuko could take care of herself in the possibility of danger on their trip.

But she didn't speak of it, not yet at least. Instead, for the next few minutes Ryuko helped them pack. Grabbing items from different rooms and bringing it to her mother and sister. A loaf and half of bread, some cheese, a few apples and vegetables for food, along with a few blankets and other clothes for the trip. Ryuko even fetched two small coin pouches for them. She wondered momentarily what she herself would need to pack up and how much.

After not too long, the three were in Ryuko's room ready to leave.

"Now remember," Ragyo spoke as Nui began lowering the ladder, "Try to keep our home clean, remember to eat your vegetables and get to bed at sundown. Don't forget to brush your teeth either, three times a day."

Ryuko nodded as she spoke, edging to her closet where she had that stranger locked up, "I know, I will! But, Mommy," she started, hand reaching for the handle. Out of the corner of her eye she could see the two above ushering her to continue, "You know how you say it's dangerous for me to come...?"

The annoyed sigh that followed her question had her heart drop. The look on Ragyo's face, the one that told her they've been over it a hundred times and it wasn't going to change had her hands start to shake. It wasn't going to go the way she wanted, it was already crystal clear.

"Ryuko, are you still obsessed with going with us?" Ragyo demanded, patience gone.

Go on; tell her, show her, "Yeah, I just, well I just thought that you don't really understand that I'm-"

Having finished with her task, Nui was at Ryuko's side, crouched down and bopping her on the nose in a friendly, playful act. Though it was far from innocent, "Come on Ryuko, we all know if you leave here you'll get snatched up by some mean person and gobbled up for dinner!" she said smiling as though she hadn't shown the child rather terrifying images of such an act before.

That was a...very powerful argument to stay. The child didn't want to be snatched up or eaten up!

"But you don't know that!" Ryuko argued. Futile but she argued, her own voice rising into a yell.

She could almost hear Ragyo's patience for her snap like a twig.

"Ryuko, you're not going and that's final!"

At hearing her beloved mother yell at her, Ryuko shrunk back, her hand letting go of the closet doors handle and her posture crying out submission. Her sister was scary when angry, but Ragyo was downright terrifying. Nui gave her a pitying look, reaching out before drawing back to not touch.

"Great," Ragyo sighed, leaning against the windowsill and bringing a hand to her head in frustration, "Now I'm the bad guy..."

It was quiet for a minute, and when that pause was over it was Ryuko who broke it. Shyly lifting her head up to look at them, her voice quite as a mouse.

"I wasn't going to ask to go with you..." she mumbled, a lie, but she felt she had to say it, "I was just gonna ask...for a book, one that had all the dangers you talk about in it. So I don't have to leave to know it?" It was an obvious lie, and if the two knew that they didn't show it.

He mother gave a soft cooing sound, closing the space between them as she knelt down, "My dear, precious child," she whispered, bringing Ryuko into her arms, planting a kiss on the top of her head and fingers running through her red streak. Trying to cheer her back up, and ease the fear she had caused. "Of course, I'll find you a few to keep you occupied. Only the best for my darling angel."

A smile formed its way onto Ryuko's mouth in response to the affection Ragyo brought upon her despite the disappointment she felt.

"Alright...come back! Don't get eaten up either!" Ryuko said, more like ordered them, earning an amused chuckle or two from her family. With the promise that they would in fact return unharmed, the two left, making their way down the ladder and once they were out of the towers view Ryuko pulled it back up.

Climbing down and resting upon her bed, the lizards gave her a questioning look as she took a spare bag she had kept under her bed and began filling it with the essentials. She wasn't going with them, so what in the world was she doing?

It was almost as though she had read their minds as she just smiled, "I'm not sitting out this time," she said, slinging her bag onto her shoulder when she was done and walking to the closet, "I can't go with Mommy and Nui, but they're not the only ones who know the outside world."

With a cry of alarm, Satsuki jerked awake. Her ears felt wet, like something had gone inside of them and came out in a wet willy. Her attempts to move were quickly still however as she found herself tied up...with jump rope? Just what the Hell had happened?

Her brows furrowed as she tried to recall the previous events. She'd fought the thief, found a tower and climbed up it but got knocked out...the box! The box was here! Craning her head though, Satsuki couldn't find the box again. It must have been moved during the time she was out. How long had she been out for? A few hours? A few days?

Suddenly she noticed the weight on her shoulders. Slowly, Satsuki turned her head to the right, and then to the left to see what was weighing them down.

"Lizards...it just has to be lizards..." she said with a groan, the captured woman really hated them.

"What's wrong with lizards? I'll have you know they are perfectly good friends!"

With a slight jump, Satsuki began scanning the room for the source of the voice, and refrained herself from explaining why lizards were terrible. Quickly enough she located a shadow in the doorway and narrowed her eyes, "Show yourself!"

There was a small hesitation; the figure would lean forward as though they were going to come out before shuffling back behind the door. It took a minute or two before they finally seemed to gather the courage to step into the light.

And boy was it not who Satsuki was expecting.

"A little kid," she whispered to herself, shaking her head in pure disbelief, "They left a little kid to interrogate me? Was the blonde too busy to question me herself after knocking me out?"

Ryuko frowned at that and tried to puff her chest out in an attempt to look more intimidating, "I'll have you know she's not the one who knocked you out!" she said and pointed her wooden sword at Satsuki, "I did!"

"You will have to forgive me for finding that impossible."

"I did do it!"

Sighing, and finding arguing with this child to be pointless, "Fine, you knocked me out," a lie, she still didn't believe that, "What do you want? Untie me!" That outburst resulted in the lizard with the white scarf giving her a slap. She hadn't even been aware lizard could slap people, let alone make it hurt. Seems it didn't like her yelling at the kid.

"Junketsu!" Ryuko scolded, frowning at his actions, "You're not, Junketsu, you're not supposed to hit her!"

The lizard actually had the audacity to look offended at being told he couldn't be violent, turning to face away from Ryuko with his head held high.

"Quite the pets you have," Satsuki commented, her cheek still stinging.

Ryuko nodded, giving a small hum as she walked over to her, running a finger along Junketsu's spine to appease him. Once the lizard was content again, she stepped back and looked at Satsuki while trying to make herself look bigger. "I'll untie you and let you go on one condition," she told her, holding up a single finger for emphasis, "You take me on an adventure outside."